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U. S. INTENSIFIES RESEARCH ON
NEWCASTLE DISEASE OF POULTRY

In search of ways to protect the health of poultry flocks, thereby making them more productive, research workers of the U. S. Department of Agriculture and cooperating agencies have begun an aggressive campaign against Newcastle disease.

Named after the coal town in England where the malady first appeared, Newcastle disease has gained, in most countries, a reputation as a fearsome killer. Except in the United States the mortality is nearly, if not actually, 100 percent. In this country it is less deadly, yet poultrymen in about 30 States have suffered from costly visits from the disease and have sought scientific aid. The cause of Newcastle disease is a virus, one of a class of notorious infective agents. Newcastle virus attacks chickens of all ages, from baby chicks to laying hens. It may also affect pigeons, ducks, geese, pheasants, and turkeys. Usually the disease first affects the respiratory organs. Later nervous symptoms appear. Young chicks have difficulty in breathing, soon become weak, and paralysis may develop. In laying flocks, besides the respiratory symptoms, egg production falls quickly. As one promising means of control, vaccination is now being actively investigated.

The Bureau of Animal Industry of the Department of Agriculture has recently provided additional facilities for research centering on improved means of diagnosis and control. Meanwhile a national committee representing Federal and State research workers, poultry breeders, hatcherymen, and poultry processing and feed interests has made a series of practical recommendations for preventing the spread of the disease. The proposals consist largely of sanitary procedures and use of disinfectants.

The accompanying pictures show the research on Newcastle disease under way in the Bureau of Animal Industry laboratory.



